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EDITORS CRITICIZE U.S.I.A. IN VIETNAM

A.P. Group Says Reporters
Get 'Half Truths' on War

MIAMI, April 20 (AP) — George Beebe, managing editor of The Miami Herald and president of the Associated Press Managing Editors Association, said today that editors felt that the American public was not getting "the full story nor the true story" of the war in Vietnam.

He issued this statement:

"It should be of deep concern to the people of the United States that military briefings in the Vietnam conflict have been placed in control of U.S.I.A. (the United States Information Agency).

"We do not object to safeguards to protect the security of our nation and our fighting men, but editors of this country do object to the contradictions, the double talk and half truths that the press is getting, both in Washington and Saigon.

"In an undeclared war, the United States press in Vietnam faces stronger restrictions than it ever has in wartime.

"With rare exceptions, the press always has felt the military should be spokesman for military matters. It resents U.S.I.A. requiring escorts when reporters talk to the men in our armed forces. I speak for the A.P.M.E. [Associated Press Managing Editors] board in protesting the present United States policy of providing information on developments in Vietnam which is inadequate and too often unreliable.

"The people of the United States deserve to be well informed in this crisis no matter how negative the news might be.

"We fear it is not getting the full story nor the true story at this time."

Set-Up in Saigon Described

SAIGON, South Vietnam (AP)—Information given to reporters about the United States military role in Vietnam is under the supervision of the United States Information Service, the field units of the Information Agency.

United States military briefing officers are subordinate to Barry Zorthian, head of the Information Service here. The U.S.I.A. is an independent agency under the policy direction of the White House and the State Department. Its job is to present the United States in the most favorable possible light.

In World War II and in Korea regulations for coverage of battles involving United States servicemen came from the military.

Mr. Zorthian has criticized

reporters in private for articles he considered unfavorable to the United States, although they did not violate security.

The press information officer here for the Military Assistance Command is Col. Ben Lagare. However, when 20 regulations for coverage of air strikes were issued a week ago, the memorandum was signed, not by Colonel Lagare, but Mr. Zorthian as "Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs."

The Zorthian memorandum states that the rules "must be observed by official briefers and other American and Vietnamese official personnel."

Held and Withheld Data

Mr. Zorthian's memorandum says that information that will "normally be released as soon as available" includes the target hit, nationality of the striking force, whether the planes were landbased or not, a general characterization of the success of the mission, tonnage or ordinance used, the numbers of strike aircraft, enemy anti-aircraft ground fire and pilot sightings of unfriendly aircraft.

The memorandum prohibits disclosure of information on aircraft taking off on strikes, identification of land bases, or location of bases from which the aircraft were launched, number of aircraft damaged, or enemy air reaction other than that actually seen by strike personnel.

The total aircraft lost will be released when recovery operations are completed, the memorandum says.

Correspondents have not objected to regulations issued for reasons of security, but have objected strongly to the policy of not allowing free access to military personnel without being accompanied by an "escort officer." This policy, they believe, inhibits military personnel during interviews.

Guides Are Called For

The Zorthian memorandum says "entry and movement within air base areas controlled by the Vietnamese Air Force will be in the company of a guide. Journalists passing through a Vietnamese Air Force area to reach an American installation will be escorted to and from the American installation by a Vietnamese Air Force guide."

Barred From Danang

United States newsmen have been barred from the big Danang Air Base since late March. Despite an announcement by Mr. Zorthian that accreditation would begin April 12, no cards have been issued.

American billets, messes and servicemen's clubs are closed to newsmen. Interviews with pilots have been generally forbidden, although some have been arranged off the base under the stipulation that the pilots dis-

cuss their missions in general terms.

Few helicopters have been made available to newsmen to go to battle areas.

The daily briefings are at the United States Information Service headquarters in Saigon. The briefing officer is Lieut. Col. L. A. Breault, who held a similar post in Korea. In Korea, Colonel Breault's information came from Army intelligence and did not have to be cleared by the U.S.I.S.

Press Club Protests

The Overseas Press Club of America is protesting "the absence of normal and adequate facilities" for American reporters to cover United States military activities in Southeast Asia.

It announced yesterday in New York that its board of governors had adopted a resolution to this effect and was seeking "rectification of this situation."